

keep house for your father. All at once John became staid and grave, like a middle-aged man. He went on with everything just the same, but I knew he would never be young any more; and he never was. Poor fellow! He had but one ambition in life, and that was to have a good wife and little ones to call him father. I have done what I could, but that is very little. And now, after he had begun to think he was to have a little compensation in you—"

She stopped and dried her eyes hastily, as though she was angry with herself for showing so much weakness.

"To think that for twenty years he has been supplying the means for you to live so as to learn to despise him!" she suddenly went on. "Don't deny it, Emily! You have despised him all this time. You are too refined for him, and can't see that an honest, single-minded, unselfish man is a gentleman, however plain and rough his manners may be. I wish to heaven you had never come!"

Again she dried her eyes angrily and tried to go on with her knitting, when all at once Emily was on her knees by her side, clinging to her hand and trying to speak, with her pale face all quivering with pain.

"Don't—don't say any more," she gasped. "I am not so heartless, aunt."

"There, there, Emily, don't be so excited, you alarm me. Why, how you are trembling, child! No, do not speak yet, wait till you are quieter. My poor child! I didn't mean to—I didn't think you would feel it like this."

"Oh! why—why didn't you—tell me—sooner? I won't go—aunt—now," and the poor girl began to sob wildly.

Miss Milward, who had never given her credit for so much feeling, was quite startled, and tried her best to lull the tempest of emotion, but for a time, in vain.

"I couldn't help it," said Emily, at last, pitifully, "it seemed so cruel."

She was on the floor now, with her head laid against her aunt's knee, a choking sob at intervals being all that was left of the storm.

Azubah's hand wandered over the soft tumbled hair with a soothing touch, but she said nothing.

"Aunt, say you forgive me," Emily faltered, presently, "forgive me and let me begin again. I shall not think of going away. You will forget it all and let me try once more?"

"Yes, child—yes. We will both begin again," replied Miss Milward. And for the first time she kissed her niece with real cordiality, as she took her in her arms.

On the next day Emily was very quiet and anxious to please her aunt, but her little attentions were paid half absently, for she was thinking of her father. The day seemed of inordinate length, now that she was longing for it to pass. John Milward was to be back at tea time, and for once his daughter longed for his arrival.

In the afternoon, Miss Milward went out on some errand of charity, and Emily was left to wait alone. As it grew toward the time, she found some satisfaction in arranging flowers daintily and placing them on the tea-table, and in putting everything in readiness.

A step on the gravel walk caught her ear as she was bringing Milward's slippers to place near his chair. She turned to the window and saw, not her father, but Tom Blakely, advancing with a slow and heavy tread. Something ominous in his looks led her to open the door and admit him herself.

"Is anything wrong?" she asked, in almost a whisper, her heart sinking at the first sight of his serious face.

He followed her into the room where tea was spread, and then spoke.

"Yes, I have brought you bad news. Where is your aunt?"

"Gone out!"

"Out! Then she will hear it before she comes back. Emily, your father has met with an accident. You must be strong and help your aunt to bear it. It will be an awful blow for her. Where has she gone? It may not be too late."

"I don't know," said Emily, almost inaudibly, "what is it?"

He led her to a chair and made her sit down before replying.

"He was thrown out while driving. The horse fell down."

"Where is he? I must go to him!" and she started to her feet and tried to pass him. "Oh, don't stop me! Let me go."

"No—no. You can do no good. Emily, can't you guess?" he said, holding her hand, his own face working the while. "How can I tell you, my poor darling!"

He had said enough. Emily stood still, with the truth gradually forcing itself upon her with all its horror. He was gone, and without a word!

"Oh, heaven!"

A wild cry, and she swayed backward and would have fallen. Tom started and threw his arms around her. Her head fell back helplessly, and he laid her on the sofa perfectly unconscious.

At that instant the door opened and John himself entered, followed by Azubah.

"You young idiot!" he said, angrily, laying his hand on the young man's shoulder, "what, in heaven's name, did you want to come and frighten her to death for? Look to her, Azubah."

The young man staggered back in astonishment.

"What! you are not—"

"Killed? No; but there has been an accident, and some fool—confound him!—spread it about that it was me. There, be off!"

With a nod of dismissal to Blakely, who, seeing it was no time for apologies, immediately quitted the house, he turned to where his sister was endeavoring to restore Emily to consciousness. As she opened her